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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000221

SIPDIS

STATE FOR P, EUR AND EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2013

TAGS: MARR MOPS PREL TU IZ

SUBJECT: TGS: NO TURKISH TROOP BUILDUP IN NORTHERN IRAQ

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch, reasons 1.5, b/d.

¶11. (C) On January 6, Pol-Mil Counselor took a copy of that day's mass daily newspaper "Milliyet" to Turkish General Staff Deputy J3 MG Bekir Kalyoncu. Splashed across the front page was a picture of 30 Turkish tanks at a base at Bamerni in northern Iraq with a headline implying the Turkish Army had begun a large buildup there.

¶12. (C) Kalyoncu called the story "bullshit." Yes, there were 30 Turkish tanks at Bamerni, but they had been there for years. The tank battalion at Bamerni was one of four Turkish battalions in northern Iraq, he said. The number of Turkish troops in northern Iraq was as they had told EUCOM at the January 4 mil-mil talks: 1500-2000. Nor was there any buildup of Turkish forces on the Turkish side of the border, he added. "The US knows well the Turkish force disposition in the north. We can't keep any secrets."

¶13. (C) Kalyoncu went on to say that any significant buildup of Turkish forces in Iraq would require a parliamentary resolution. Also, Turkey had asked during the mil-mil talks for US political support for a larger Turkish presence in the north as well as US help in convincing the Iraqi Kurds that Turkey had no aggressive intentions. The US had supplied neither to date, and Turkey would not act without them. He added that the TGS would probably discuss the issue with KDP leader Barzani during his January 9-10 talks in Ankara. Kalyoncu concluded by noting that he would be the one to give the order to send additional troops into northern Iraq, and he had no intention of doing so any time soon.

PEARSON